

R E M A R K S

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

THE TITLE

The title has been amended to more clearly indicate the nature of the invention to which the claims are directed, as required by the Examiner.

THE CLAIMS

New claims 14-17 are based on the disclosure in the specification and drawings at, for example, pages 33-48 and Figs. 9-14.

No new matter has been added, and it is respectfully requested that new claims 14-17 be approved and entered.

New claims 14-17, moreover, avoid the informality pointed out by the Examiner at the bottom of page 2 of the Office Action. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the rejection under 35 USC 112, be withdrawn.

THE PRIOR ART REJECTION

Claims 1-6 were rejected under 35 USC 102 as being anticipated by US 2002/0003897 ("Tanaka"), and claims 7-13 were rejected under 35 USC 103 as being obvious in view of the

combination of Tanaka and US 2001/0052995 ("Idehara"). These rejections, however, are respectfully traversed with respect to the claims as amended hereinabove.

New independent claim 14 recites a system comprising a plurality of image-processing apparatuses which are coupled to a network, and each of which includes a rasterizer to conduct a rasterizing operation for rasterizing image data that represents an image and for outputting the rasterized image data; and an image-printing apparatus coupled to the network, which is coupled to the plurality of image-processing apparatuses through the network, and which includes an image-forming section which forms a reproduced image on a sheet.

Moreover, according to new independent claim 14, the plurality of image-processing apparatuses are divided into a plurality of groups, each of which includes at least one of the image-processing apparatuses.

And according to new independent claim 14, a first image-processing apparatus belonging to a first one of the groups is capable of performing the rasterizing operation in response to a request by a second image-processing apparatus belonging to a second one of the groups, and the second image-processing apparatus belonging to the second group comprises a storage section to store access restriction information for specifying the first group as a group to which an accessing right is given

and as including an image-processing apparatus to which the rasterizing operation can be requested.

In addition, like new independent claim 14, new independent claim 16 recites a plurality of image-processing apparatuses which are divided into a plurality of groups, and an image-printing apparatus, wherein a first image-processing apparatus belonging to a first one of the groups is capable of performing the rasterizing operation in response to a request by a second image-processing apparatus belonging to a second one of the groups.

According to new independent claim 16, moreover, the system comprises a server that is coupled to the network, wherein the server comprises a storage section to store access restriction information for specifying the first group as including an image-processing apparatus that is capable of performing the rasterizing operation in response to a request, and the server gives an accessing right to access the first group to the second image-processing apparatus belonging to the second group.

Thus, with the structure recited in new independent claims 14 and 16, the plurality of image-processing apparatuses are divided into a plurality of groups, each of which includes at least one of the image-processing apparatuses, and a first image-processing apparatus belonging to a first one of the groups is capable of performing the rasterizing operation in response to

a request by a second image-processing apparatus belonging to a second one of the groups, wherein the second image-processing apparatus itself (claim 14) or a server (claim 16) stores access restriction information. With this structure, it is possible to improve the efficiency of the rasterizing operations and printing operations to be performed in the whole system. See also page 46, line 17 to page 48, line 2, with respect to advantageous effects that can be achieved with the structure recited in new independent claims 14 and 16.

It is respectfully submitted that Tanaka and Idehara, even if considered in combination, do not disclose, teach or suggest the structural features and advantageous effects of the systems recited in new independent claims 14 and 16.

At the bottom of page 5 of the Office Action, the Examiner states that Tanaka merely discloses a single copy machine and a single printer. Therefore, the Examiner would apparently acknowledge that Tanaka does not disclose, teach or suggest a system comprising an image-printing apparatus and a plurality of image-processing apparatuses divided into groups or the structure related thereto recited in new independent claims 14 and 16.

However, the Examiner has cited Idehara to supply the missing teachings of Tanaka. In particular, the Examiner asserts that Idehara discloses access restriction information in Fig. 32 and at paragraph [0165] thereof.

It is respectfully pointed out, however, that the information shown in Fig. 32 and described in paragraph [0165] of Tanaka clearly does not specify a group (of at least one image-processing apparatus) as a group to which an accessing right is given and as including an image-processing apparatus to which a rasterizing operation can be requested, as recited in claim 14, and clearly does not specify a group (of at least one image-processing apparatus) as including an image-processing apparatus that is capable of performing the rasterizing operation in response to a request.

Indeed, it is respectfully submitted that paragraph [0165] of Idehara merely discloses information that represents usage statuses or histories of apparatuses, such as printer A, computer A, and so on, in the system, for individuals. That is, according to paragraph [0165] of Idehara, "the table [shown in Fig. 32] is used for cataloging output apparatuses which each of the individuals normally uses. For example, the individual named A normally uses the A printer 21, the facsimile apparatus 31 and the A personal computer 11."

It is respectfully submitted that this information of Idehara does not specify a group (of at least one image processing apparatus) in the manner recited in either new independent claim 14 or new independent claim 16.

Indeed, it is respectfully submitted that the feature recited in independent claims 14 and 16, whereby a first image-processing apparatus belonging to a first one of the groups is capable of performing the rasterizing operation in response to a request by a second image-processing apparatus belonging to a second one of the groups, is not disclosed or suggested by Idehara (in this connection, it is noted that "rasterizing" appears not to be mentioned by Idehara).

It is respectfully submitted, therefore, that the "access restriction information" according to claims 14 or 16 is not disclosed, taught or suggested by Idehara, and it is respectfully submitted that Idehara also does not disclose, teach or suggest a first image-processing apparatus belonging to a first one of the groups being capable of performing the rasterizing operation in response to a request by a second image-processing apparatus belonging to a second one of the groups, as recited in claims 14 and 16. And as noted above, the Examiner acknowledges that Tanaka merely discloses a single copy machine and a single printer.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that even if Idehara and Tanaka were combinable in the manner suggested by the Examiner, the structural features and advantageous effects of the systems recited in new independent claims 14 and 16 still would not be achieved or rendered obvious.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that new independent claims 14 and 16 and claims 15 and 17 respectively depending therefrom clearly patentably distinguish over Idehara and Tanaka, taken singly or in combination, under 35 USC 102 as well as under 35 USC 103.

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Entry of this Amendment, allowance of the claims and the passing of this application to issue are respectfully solicited.

If the Examiner has any comments, questions, objections or recommendations, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the telephone number given below for prompt action.

Respectfully submitted,

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